Informant: LMP-S2 **Language: Spanish**
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Interviewer: Claudia Hernandez
Transcriber: Reyna Ronelli

CH: I want to ask you some questions about alcoholism. What are the causes of alcoholism?

S2: Well, alcoholism is something that is very much a part of the Latin culture. It's like an education that is passed on through observation as one is growing up.

CH: is it an illness?

S2: Yes, it is an illness because it is an addiction.

CH: Ok, I've heard of people that are inflicted with alcoholism due to witchcraft. What do you think of that?

S2: Well, that could be true but that is not always the case. However, it can be a causing factor of alcoholism.

CH: Why would anyone inflict such an illness upon someone?

S2: Because of hate, or anger.

CH: How do you know that the alcoholism has been inflicted through witchcraft?

S2: I would have to do a consultation. There is so much talk about works that involve putting the picture of a person and other stuff in alcohol, because that is how it is done, and in fact, I have known people that have been affected by this.

CH: [???]

S2: I can't say there have been many, but the answer is yes.

CH: Is it something that is more common in men or women?

S2: It is more common in men because they are more open to that kind of thing. Women are more reserved, it seems, and when women have that kind of problem it rarely gets completely out of control and out in the open.

CH: What are some of the causes for alcoholism?

S2: It can sometimes be due to deception, depression, or it can simply be cultural. For example, a person might have been exposed to alcoholism by virtue of having lived with an alcoholic, where alcohol was abused, where there was a lot of fighting and just a lot of problems.

CH: Do you think that it can be inherited?

S2: Sure, I think it can be inherited.

CH: Now, we are talking about the Latino culture, do you have any idea what ethnic group is affected the most? Are there more Salvadorans, Mexicans, or Guatemalans affected by this problem?

S2: I couldn't really generalize. It really is a problem across the board. We really could not point the finger at any one particular ethnic group.

CH: What is your recommendation for people that have a problem with alcohol?

S2: Sometimes, it's all about having faith. You will sometimes hear of a person that turned to Evangelism and claims that he/she was cured of alcoholism. When in fact, the person was not cured because he/she became an Evangelist but rather because he/she found a faith to hold on to. For this same reason, some people come to botánicas because this is a place where they can find a little bit of faith since the person is lacking faith. We can transmit this faith to the person that needs it. We tell the person what he/she can do and this gives the person some hope, something to hold on to. It is like someone that is drowning or sinking, that sees a branch or tree to hold on to and takes a hold of it. There are people that are weak minded, that are easily influenced, and that think there is nothing to look forward to.

CH: Is there a remedy that the person can take that is herbal based, or maybe something else?

S2: There is a lot of talk about herbal remedies but in reality, I think that the person has to want to leave the addiction in order to quit. Otherwise, nothing will be able to help the person. There is a tree known as "San Ignatius' kidneys" (***Abas de San Ignacio***), where a remedy is taken from this tree in the form of a tea that can be given to the person that drinks a lot. It acts as a laxative more than anything else. What this does, is it takes away the person's desire to drink because it will generate nausea in the person and will make the person want to vomit.

CH: Can you give me an example of a case that you have dealt with?

S2: I have a female client that was bringing her husband for treatment. Every week I would light a candle for him, and as long as I was lighting the candle, he seemed to be doing better, but as soon as she saw that he had stopped drinking, and I stopped lighting the candle, suddenly he regressed. She has been back since, and as long as we light the candle, he seems to be more calm and doesn't drink as much, so I don't know what this is about, other than maybe it's about having faith.

CH: The cases of alcoholism that you have dealt with-is it usually that a family member brings the person with the problem to you for treatment or does the person with the problem come on his/her own?

S2: Usually a family member will bring the person. It is rare that a person with the problem will come to see me on his/her own. When a person comes in to see me and is

looking for help it is because the person is desperate, and that person will usually ask if he/she has been a victim of witchcraft.

CH: They are desperate?

S2: Yes.

CH: How do you see the Latino community and alcoholism?

S2: How do you mean?

CH: Like the issue of gayness, is alcoholism accepted or not acceptable in the Latino community?

S2: I think that it is something that is not viewed as normal.

CH: Are there set norms?

S2: Sure, I think that things have to be taken in moderation, with respect for yourself as well as others.

CH: How does a person know if you have crossed the line?

S2: You yourself will know when you have crossed the line.

CH: When you say that it is not normal, then how do you explain it?

S2: It can be a mental or motivation deficiency, a desperation, or anxiety. Sometimes we look for an easy way out because we are weak, or we are incompetent and we can't reach our goals, and we are not well centered. From all of these things, desperation arises and we might look for an easy way out. It can be due to psychological problems, or it can be due to physical or mental abuse in one's family, where there is a pattern of machismo that has been passed on from one generation to the next.

CH: So, there are many things that can cause alcoholism?

S2: Yes.

CH: I think this all for now, thank you.

S2: You are welcomed.

END OF TAPE